Fathers as First Warriors & Guardians – Guest Post by Myles Connolly

"Today, fatherhood is an heroic calling. The father of olden times was in many ways an idyllic character, living serenely in the bosom of his family, planning and saving for the future. But today he lives in turmoil and toils in vain. If he is industrious, if he is competent, he does not work for his family and the future but for the lazy and incompetent everywhere. No longer has his home the peace of the old homestead. His children ride in engines of death and destruction, and the jangling of the telephone in the depth of the night may mean tragedy in the air or on the highway. Diseases of the mind, born of the madness and artificiality of the modern environment, derange and sometimes destroy those he loves.

"More menacing is the increased threat against faith and morals endlessly made by an increasingly arrogant and unbelieving world. More dangerous by far are the soul's diseases (with skepticism and apathy predominating), present always like a plague. Life outside of the monastic walls is perilous, fiercely competitive, often brutal. The dedicated father today is a hero, and if you ask why he faces his burdens so bravely, I can answer only because in him is the stuff of saints. Not for him is the consolation of applause. The mother is praised in song and extolled in story. But the father walks the common way without bugles, without drums, with no flags flying. He, truly, has given hostages to fortune.

"Those holy men and women who have given up the world are glorious children of God, but if there were no harassed, slaving poor fathers, there would be none of those glorious children, if for no other reason than they would never have been born. Peace of mind and peace of soul are lovely possessions but they are not for the dedicated father. The particular saint in him demands that he go out and meet the challenge of the day, that he be concerned not with his own serenity and well-being but with those in his care, that he venture forth into the world and there, thick in the masses of men, seek the opportunity to love his neighbor and to love his enemy, so that, in advance and not in retreat, in battle and not in seclusion, he may prove himself worthy of Him who has shared with him the divine power of creation. The priest may offer his Mass and the nun her sacrifices, and the contemplatives may send up their unceasing assault of prayer and mortification-all may cry out for succor, may plead to stay the hand of Eternal Justice—but it is the father, that undistinguished, yawning man you see in the early morning leaving home for the shop, the office, the factory, the mine—that tired, troubled person you see returning home at night, often with a smile that is false and a cheerfulness without foundation—it is he who is the first warrior and the first guardian of the Faith. For he is the captain of the home, the citadel on which the Christian civilization is built. There is no order or organization to record his heroism or promote his beatification. He is the common, oftentimes inglorious beast of burden, his greatest distinction being the resemblance he bears to the ass that carried Christ."

From *Dan England and the Noonday Devil* by Myles Connolly.

Happy Father's Day!

NB: I'm personally convinced that Dan England in Myles Connolly's novella is a type of G.K. Chesterton. A "what-if" scenario in which he never met Frances Blogg.

Paul Nowak

Paul Nowak is a husband and father of 7, who also happens to be a writer and author. He has written *The Way of the Christian Samurai* among other books.

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